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THE INFLUENCE OF THE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF PALESTINE ON HEBREW THOUGHT.

By PROFESSOR FELIX ADLER.

MR. PRESIDENT, FELLOWS OF THE SOCIETY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.—If you will follow me, in imagination, for a moment, to the banks of the sacred Ganges, you will behold before you a teeming soil, a luxuriant vegetation, birds of bright plumage, diversified with a thousand varying hues, grand, stately trees, with creepers curiously interlaced between them, that form a net-work of dense, impenetrable jungle. It is the land of the mystic lotus and the banyan; a land of dreams and fantasies. An easy thing it is to trace in the physical geography of this country many of those striking peculiarities that mark the political and religious history of the Indian nations.

The indolence of the people was the result partly of the prodigal bounty of nature, which seems to render the labor of human hands almost needless, partly of the sultry heats of summer, and the incessant rains of the wintry season, that combine to make exertion of every kind inexpressibly arduous.

The forest life of the Hindoo sages was the natural resource of contemplative spirits who sought protection from the fierceness of the noonday sun in the seclusion of their sylvan retreats; while the influence of a tropical environment is still more clearly visible in that passiveness, that complete self-absorption, that longing for absolute repose, which distinguishes the religious systems of the Brahmins and Buddhists alike from any other that the world has seen. The highest aim of the Hindoo religions is rest. After endless and painful resurrections, the soul sinks back into the Brahma whence it arose, or is merged into the shoreless ocean of Buddha's Nirvana.

The supreme boon which the religions of the vigorous, life-loving nations of the western world hold out as the reward of virtue is immortality, is the continuance of conscious existence through the boundless eons of futurity.

The supreme solace of the devout Hindoo is the hope of *annihilation*,

of unbroken rest — of a long, long sleep from which there shall be no awakening.

It is the enervating effect of a sultry climate which has given character to all their thought.

If we turn from India to the valley of the Nile, the influence of its physical complexion upon the mind of its inhabitants will be found no less impressive. The placid serenity of the sky, the unbroken regularity of the river's rise and fall, the conservatism of nature, in a word, to which we owe the existence of the pyramids and palaces at the present day — all these contributed to inspire the Egyptian people with an overweening trust in the stability of earthly affairs, and taught them to confide their works, their names, nay, their very bodies to the keeping of future ages, without a passing doubt of their continued preservation.

The advantages which European nations have derived from the blessings that nature showered upon their much-favored continent are too apparent to stand in need of extended comment. In the temperate regions of Europe the prerequisites for the development of a high order of civilization are indeed united in an unusual and felicitous constellation.

Here the soil demands the fertilizing labor of man; while the yield which he receives in return is sufficient to incite and reward his industry.

Regular habits are thus encouraged, and a spirit of manly self-reliance and independence arises, unknown to eastern nations. Europe is free from those sudden and terrible visitations that have so often nipped the opening buds of culture in the tropical regions. Production is continually enlarged; and society is at length in a position to spare its finer intellects, and to set them apart for discovery and invention, to open the highways of science, and to embellish the pleasure-grounds of art.

Even a casual survey of some of the most remarkable quarters of the ancient world has thus revealed a certain correspondence between the physical environment and the intellectual development of nations. It may, therefore, be reasonably presumed that closer scrutiny of any particular country will result in the discovery of a still more intimate connection between the material and spiritual phenomena that transpired in its midst.

I propose to undertake an inquiry of this kind this evening. I propose to examine some of the leading peculiarities of Palestine's

geography, such as the relative distribution of mountain and valley, its geographical formation, the climatic conditions to which it is subject, with a view to determining the influence they exerted on Hebrew thought.

In attempting so difficult a task, I am conscious of the grave difficulties that present themselves at the very threshold of my undertaking. As a rule historians have not hitherto availed themselves, to any great extent, of the aid which physical geography proffers for the solution of historical problems.

It is customary in general to treat this valuable auxiliary with a degree of indifference bordering on contempt. While more particularly in the department of history, which I have made my specialty, and which embraces the record of the Old Testament within its field of research, powerful religious scruples have combined to strengthen the general prejudice, it being feared that the rude hand of science might attempt to violate the sacredness of the Hebrew writings. I need not say that these fears are groundless. Truth has no reason to shun inquiry. While deceit may veil its doubtful beginnings in the twilight vagueness of mystery, we must insist that the truths of the Bible dare welcome the light, and will only gain in grandeur and beauty as the conditions under which they arose are more thoroughly understood. I lay stress upon these last words, "the conditions under which they arose," in order to guard, at the outset, against a misconception which, if permitted to arise unchecked, would seriously embarrass our further progress.

In dealing with the influence of material conditions on the development of thought, we do not for a moment entertain the preposterous idea of derogating from the integrity and dignity of mind. Physical conditions are the occasion, by no means the cause, of intellectual action; as the bud will not open without sunlight, but the sunlight is not, therefore, the cause of the flower. The mind is a self-acting agent, obeying, so far as we can tell, laws peculiar to itself; yet the mind is "many-sided," and depends largely on external forces for the direction in which its powers shall be developed — whether, for instance, the imagination is to predominate, as under southern skies, or the purely reasoning faculties, as in the temperate regions of the north. The question of the ultimate constitution of soul is left totally unaffected by the species of discussion upon which we are now about to enter.

The novelty of our undertaking, while it may lend it a certain charm in the eyes of the student, enhances the difficulty of presenting

it fairly to the criticism of an audience. The limits of an evening's discourse will of themselves preclude our entering upon many points of vital importance. Others must be passed over in complete silence. I shall content myself, therefore, with offering an outline merely of the conclusions I have arrived at in the course of my investigations, and must rely on your patience to indulge the defects that are inseparable from every tentative effort in a new direction. If our main assumption is correct, we must expect to find the country of the Hebrews a peculiar land, even as Israel was a peculiar people. Let us begin by taking a general survey of its relative position to the surrounding territories.

Palestine is a land set apart by itself, condemned to solitude by barriers which nature herself has set up, and which proved insurmountable to ancient people.

On its northern frontier, it is approached by the great mountain chains of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, between which the narrow valley of Coele-Syria opens a highway of communication with the banks of the Euphrates for the caravan or the conqueror. Branching off from the roots of Anti-Lebanon two great ranges extend, in parallel lines, through the whole length of the sacred land, and are continued far into the ocean of sand that bounds its southern border. It is the western range that once embraced the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and with which alone, therefore, we are concerned here. This range is shut in on the north by the higher mountains of Aram, on the south by the waste land of Idumea and the desert; on the west, by the Mediterranean sea; on the east, by the deep gorge of the Jordan valley. It is thus hemmed in on every side, and free intercourse with the surrounding countries is rendered forever impossible. Its inhabitants, isolated from their fellow-men, are thrown entirely upon their own resources, and thus acquire a certain hardness of character, an aristocratic pride of race, a strong sense of superiority which continually challenges the hatred of mankind, and at the same time lends them such coherency that all the world's hate is powerless to crush them. It is certainly a remarkable fact that even those physical features which we are accustomed to regard as the natural highways of human intercourse have, in the case of this wonderful land, tended rather to retard than to foster the spirit of enterprise and the desire for communication. The sea has elsewhere proved the great carrier of the commerce of nations and thus bringing them nearer together, has often washed out their mutual aversions and animosities.

But the waters of the Mediterranean are only an additional bulwark to the solitude of Palestine. Along that whole coast, from Gaza to the "Ladder of the Tyrians," there is barely a single sheltered harbor which could serve as a safe anchorage for shipping. A great river is elsewhere considered the natural bond of connection between the peoples that inhabit its banks, permitting them to travel with ease from their own to other lands, opening the way for an interchange of their several products, encouraging the arts and enlivening trade. But observe how the Jordan, the one great river which Palestine possesses, disappoints these expectations; nay, how, by a combination of circumstances peculiar to itself, it tends to produce effects the very opposite of those we looked for. The Jordan and the deep-cut valley through which it runs, presents, on purely geological grounds, one of the most interesting phenomena on the face of the globe. Rising on the slopes of Mt. Hermon, the outmost sentinel of Anti-Lebanon, the river passes through the Lake of Merom, high up in the north of the Holy Land, descends three hundred feet and reaches the Lake of Tiberias whose name has been rendered memorable by the scenes of the New Testament enacted on its shores, and by the associations connecting it with the events of the later history of the Jews. A bright, sunny lake, abounding in fishes, on whose western border a rich vegetation still speaks of plenty, and the lily of the valley decked in its scarlet colors which Solomon's royal robes could not rival, and the endless voices of the mellifluous singing birds, still tell of beauty and of joy. Thence, still flowing downward, the Jordan passes into a wild rocky region, forcing its way between high cliffs with steep precipitous descents on either side, painfully twisting through sixty miles of ceaseless windings, and, at last, after leaping over twenty-seven rapids, and having accomplished a further descent of 1,000 feet, it reaches the steaming cauldron of the Dead Sea. For a while it struggles to maintain its identity as the turbid streak in the green surface of the sea indicates. But it is in vain. In those heavy nauseous waters where all life perishes, it too dies; and its stream is mingled with the salt waves of the lake of death. This lake is situated at a depth of 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, being the most depressed sheet of water on the surface of the earth. Along the bare shores that encircle it there reigns, even in the month of January, a heat so intense as to make life in its vicinity almost intolerable to the European. Bits of pure sulphur and nitre lie around, and everywhere the eye meets the signs

of nature's destructive agencies. A deep haze produced by the rapid evaporation of the water settles over the river's grave, and the low ridge of rock salt, connected by the legend with the story of Lot's escape, that marks the southern extremity of the lake, is the last limit to which the waters of the Jordan can be supposed to penetrate. Thus this wonderful river, far from leading outward to communion with the external world, is itself absorbed before it can depart from the boundaries of Palestine. And with the ravines that line its sides, with the barren waste, "the desert of the Jordan," that marks its course on either hand, with the sultry climate that prevails in its neighborhood, forms but a new barrier to shut in the eastern border of the land of the Hebrews.

On the high hills of Moab that overlook the basin of the Dead Sea and take in in one broad view a great portion of the promised land, Balaam, the seer from the East, stood of old to curse the outspread hosts of Israel. And as he gazed from the top of rocks and lofty heights on the future home of Hebrew tribes, he exclaimed — the first words that escaped his lips: — "Behold the people that dwell in solitude." It is the same expression which involuntarily occurs to every traveler, the same striking feature that first suggests itself to our notice. Loneliness, retirement from the commerce of the world, a secluded land — an exclusive people! It is hardly possible to overestimate the influence of this peculiarity of the country on Israelitish history. Let us remember that however grateful the amenities of social intercourse may be, there arises in all intimate connection with our fellows a tendency toward uniformity which acts as a check upon the development of distinct individual effort. Whenever, therefore, an extraordinary mind, a genius of unique powers, appears among men, he finds solitude to be the essential condition for the growth and perfection of his separate self. And thus the genius of the Hebrew people needed solitude, for their mission was to break loose from the traditions of the world and to produce a system of religious thought at variance with all the collected wisdom and the cherished belief of antiquity. Indeed, within the borders of Palestine itself, a distinction is to be made between the different districts of the country, in proportion as their position was more or less isolated, a distinction with which the unequal distribution of monotheism over different portions of the Holy Land will be found exactly to accord. In the south, the kingdom of Judah, this feature is most prominent, in the middle region of Samaria, the kingdom of Israel,

it is considerably less so, while in the extreme north it is almost entirely wanting. Correspondingly the stronghold of monotheism was among the hills of Judea, its authority greatly limited, if it was ever to any considerable degree recognized, which may be doubted, in Samaria, while it was utterly weak and uncertain in Galilee. Let us dwell upon this point a moment longer, though its full significance can only appear in the third and last division of our discourse.

The size of Palestine is, as in the case of Greece, hardly commensurate with its importance. "It is not considered among the nations." The whole country from Dan to Beersheba is only about 180 miles in length, fifty in breadth. And yet, within this small territory, what diversity of character! Even vegetation assumes the most various forms. In the tropical climate of the Jordan gorge flourish the palm tree and the oleander; the oak and the terebinth at Hebron and Shechem. The snows are on Hermon, the cool breezes on Mount Ephraim, the sultry torpor of an Egyptian summer upon the lake Asphaltitis.

The realm of Judah is a mountainous district, its people a race of mountaineers. Jerusalem is situated at an elevation of 2,600 feet above the Mediterranean, and of about 4,000 feet above the basin of the Dead Sea. The hills are of bare limestone rock, rising in concentric circles, and everywhere displaying the remains of an ancient terrace culture. There are no plains to be found here, but only narrow valleys, and wild, precipitous ravines, whose craggy sides are filled with innumerable subterranean caverns of unknown depth and labyrinthic structure. The aspect of the country is stern and monotonous. There is nothing to please the eye but dull, tedious sameness on all sides. It may be that the influence of the neighboring desert, and its hot winds is traceable in this general bareness of the southern kingdom. Standing on one of the many conical heights whose frequency it has been well observed gave rise to the prominent cult of "high places" among the ancient Hebrews, the eye of the traveler beholds in the east the steep cliffs that overhang the forlorn waters of the sea of death, and further off, the long line of the blue mountains of Moab; in the west the wide expanse of the Mediterranean, glittering, perhaps, in the last rays of the setting sun; around the dizzy precipices, the mysterious caves, the somber, silent hills. This is a land where the thoughts of men would dwell upon the Infinite in its gravest, grandest, gloomiest forms. The imagination fired by the strong, rich wine that grows around, winged its way

upward on the wild strains of passionate music that re-echoed in these vales. It burst forth in eloquent song. It gave birth to the majestic rhythmic measures of the psalms and hymns of Scripture, and filled them with the symbols of its surroundings — the eagle and his eyry; the rock that cannot be moved, the roaring torrent, the voices of the thunder, and the glare of the long-flashing lightning. But no gorgeous pantheon could rise here, no plastic molding of the form, no worship of the beautiful. There is a deep tinge of the solemn in the character of the Judeans. In their early worship they inclined to the dark rather than the joyful of the two forms of religion which divided the Semitic cults between them. Their god strikes dead whoever ventures to approach him, his presence brings pestilence, even to his own chosen people he speaks amid the din and terror of the tempest.

As we approach the central region, commonly known as Samaria, the scene gradually changes. Even the hills, it is conjectured from their closer proximity to the sea and its moist winds, assume a more genial aspect, their slopes being covered with timber, frequently to the very summit. The main feature that distinguishes the land of the ten tribes from its southern neighbor is the occurrence of valleys and plains.

These break through the central mass of hills which we have previously described in general terms as the abode of the Hebrews, and thus introduce a new element of culture into Israelitish history. "Cut out as with a knife" from the mountains of Ephraim and Galilee we behold besides numerous sunny valleys the great historic plain of Esdraelon that opens a level road between the seashore and the Jordan. Here in the land of the olive and the palm Joseph "the prince of his brethren" dwelt by the fountain, delighted in the plenty of his kine, received the choice things of the heavens above and the depths below, and gathered the rich blessings of Jehovah on his head. It was indeed a land which fully answers to the inspired description of the dying patriarch. The pale, blue mist that appears in the vale of Schechem, the ancient seat of the northern kings, and lends such beauty and softness to the landscape is seen nowhere else throughout Palestine. Grey groves of olives delight the eye, and fields of waving wheat and barley present an appearance of ease and affluence that we look for in vain in the rocky regions of Judea. Jerusalem was raised upon a high table-land thousands of feet above the ocean, but the capital cities of Samaria were built upon the plain, or at least upon comparatively insignificant elevations.

In Judea, life was concentrated, intense, self-sufficient, utterly secluded. In Samaria it was expansive, open to external influence enlivened by intercourse with the surrounding nations. Joseph delighted in his vehicles, of which Judah was entirely destitute. The road to Egypt was open and must have been frequently traveled while the bond of connection with the Phœnicians was close and firm. Even the dialect of the Samaritan land seems to have been more nearly allied to the language of the heathen Syrians, if we are to trust the researches of Ewald, Renan and others. In the easier circumstances attending life in the plains the repellant sternness of Judea was toned down, if not entirely lost, and the more sensuous existence of the people led them to take a more sensuous view, as of all other things, so also of religion. Here Jehovah was worshiped, under the form of the calf, down to the very day of Samaria's destruction. The Baal came in by way of Phœnicia, the Apis and Mnevis were imported by Jeroboam from Egypt. It is important to notice in this connection that the story of Aaron and the golden calf is typical of the religious changes which Jeroboam introduced in Israel. The two sons of Aaron who typify the early form of sensuous worship were called Nadab and Abihu. They, not their two brothers who became the bearers of a purer monotheism, ascended with their father to the top of the mountain, where it is distinctly stated that they actually saw Jehovah and offered sacrifices of calves. They were destroyed in the sanctuary for offering *strange fire* to their God. The two sons of Jeroboam were likewise called Nadab and Abihu, names which we hardly meet with again in the whole range of the sacred Scriptures, and both perished by a premature death. The words which Jeroboam used in inaugurating the worship of the calf are literally the same as those with which Aaron opened the riotous orgies of the people around their golden idol in the desert. To confirm these indications we are informed in the book of Judges that a line of priests actually existed at Bethel, the place where Jeroboam erected the calf, who traced their descent from Aaron and who probably remained there till a revolution, noticed in Chronicles, compelled them to seek refuge in Judea.

Turning now to the third and northernmost division of Palestine we behold in Galilee by far the loveliest district of the Holy Land. High, green, grassy valleys, groves of sycamores, villages picturesquely grouped, the forms of the mountains diversified, the lakes bright and blue! A land of plenty and of peace. But in the history of ancient

Israel it played no part. The inhabitants were a simple people, whose wants were amply satisfied by the free gifts of nature, whose energies were never called forth by hard struggles against a stubborn soil and warlike borderers. They lived in tranquil submission, "dipping their feet in soil," indeed, but also bearing the burdens of their heathen masters like the ass. Their country was full of foreigners, with whom they intermarried, and whose customs and religion they no doubt to a large extent adopted. No patriarch ever built an altar in their territory to mark the spot of future shrines, no prophet rose of old in their midst. It was "Galilee of the Gentiles."

Reviewing the regions we have passed over, the whole country now appears to us like an enlargement of its own most revered sanctuary. Judah is the high priest alone in his office, alone in the Holy of Holies, where no form is seen save the cherubim over the pledge of the covenant. The sons of Samaria are priests in the outer shrine, who worship in lighted hall with table spread and amid the odor of perfumes, the signs and symbols of earthly things, that appeal to the senses. But Galilee is the open courtyard, the great gateway to the world of strangers without, around which the empires of the ancient time, Syria, Babylon, Media and the Isles of the West were gathered, and through which the name of Jehovah that resounded from the inmost sanctuary was borne forth at last as a gospel to all nations.

I should here remark that the sources on which we rely for these descriptions, are mainly the excellent works of Dr. Robinson, the Report of the U. S. Expedition under the command of Lieut. Lynch, the charming book of Dean Stanley, entitled "Sinai and Palestine," Ritter's "Erdkunde," Munk's "Palestine," Neubauer's "Etudes Talmudiques," Schwarz's "Das Heilige Land." In view of the impression which generally prevails abroad that Americans, as a people, are exclusively devoted to the pursuit of gain, it is gratifying to report that the labors of our own countrymen in this department of science at least, far surpass anything that has been done by foreigners.

The second characteristic feature of Palestine's physical geography now demands our attention.

Instructed by the achievements of science, we of to-day are accustomed to regard with satisfaction the reduction of phenomena seemingly the most anomalous to fundamental principle. We see in the falling of a leaf, in the form of a dewdrop, the manifestations of inexorable law. The mightiest as well as the most insignificant phe-

nomena we know, are governed by agencies from whose chosen path there is no departure. Nay, it is this very cosmos, this orderly arrangement which meets us everywhere, that is most apt to kindle our fancy and elicit our admiration. But matters were different in a previous and lower stage of human development. At that time men were children in their habits of thought, and like children, they regarded the natural course of events as a matter of course, their attention being fixed only by whatever startled or alarmed them. Such occurrences, indeed, over which they had no control, they were ready to ascribe to the working of a higher power, and their awe went out toward the beings in whose hands they conceived their destinies to repose for weal or woe. Where climatic or other conditions were conducive to the formation of regular habits of life, the tendency to refer the natural to the supernatural was weakened. Where men were allowed to exert their skill upon production, they acquired confidence in their own energies, and as they beheld their work grow through their own efforts, security lulled them into comparative indifference with regard to the mysterious interference of powers above them. But, among those nations where disturbing causes were both frequent and sudden, the opposite took place. In our own age we may see this contrast exemplified among the so-called lower classes if we compare the settled habits and consequent callousness of the artisans in our large towns with the uneasy superstitions of sailors and miners. To apply these remarks to the case before us, we find the conditions of existence in Palestine to be extremely precarious and unstable. In the first place, the inhabitants are entirely dependent on the rain, not only for comfort, but even for the bare means of subsistence. Twice in the year (late in October and in March) the showers are expected to descend. If they come in good season the cisterns are filled, the water-courses replenished, the dry soil greedily sucks in the welcome moisture. Soon the fields are covered with abundant verdure and plenty reigns. But woe if they fail, even for a few weeks. Then vegetation withers, the soil is baked and burnt, the beasts droop, and men perish amid all the agonies of thirst and the horrors of starvation. Thus, year by year, the inhabitants of this land were made to feel the uncertain tenure of their being. Death was ever before the gate, and life ever a gift bestowed or withheld at the pleasure of a mightier will. As the book of Deuteronomy has it — your land is not like that of Egypt which is watered by the regular

inundations of the Nile. But it is a land upon which the eyes of Jehovah must rest from the beginning of the year to its end. If you obey him, he will give you rain, if you rebel, he will destroy you by refusing it. And elsewhere it is said that Jehovah will send down rain on one city, and restrain it from another, as a punishment or a reward. The general feeling of insecurity thus produced was heightened by the occurrence of destructive earthquakes. Deep gashes opened in the earth and swallowed up what it had required, perhaps, the labor of ages to produce. The dire plague of the locust, too, which Joel has painted in such vivid colors, contributed in the same direction. They are described as coming with ranks unbroken, a silent host. The sky is darkened by their numbers, the sun is hid. The land is as the garden of Eden before them, as the track of war in their rear. On all sides the fears of the people were thus alarmed, and each fresh experience served only to confirm them in the conviction of their utter dependence on superhuman agencies. These sudden eruptions that broke the even course of events, these seemingly capricious inroads on the laws of natural sequences were regarded as manifestations of the Divine Power through which it was pleased to make its omnipotence felt. Hence it came to pass that when men desired to learn the wishes of the Deity for the regulation of their own particular affairs, they were ready to consider any occurrence that seemed *at variance with the laws of nature* as an indication of his pleasure; and such, indeed, was the opinion of the ancient Hebrews. Gideon, being uncertain whether to attack the Midianites, places a fleece of wool on the ground at night saying if it be covered with dew in the morning, and the ground about it perfectly dry, it is Jehovah's will that I proceed. This occurs as foreseen. To make sure, he reverses the experiment the next night, and then gives battle, confident of victory. Elijah divides the waters of Jordan with his mantle, and thereby proves his Divine commission. For the same purpose Elisha causes an iron ax to swim on the top of the water, and brings it about that a few loaves feed a great multitude, so that they are sated and even leave over. As late as the days of Isaiah, the shadow on the sun-dial suddenly moves backward ten degrees, and this is received as a sign that the prophet's words are divinely sanctioned.

In all these instances the standard by which the divine signification of an event is determined does not consist merely in its fortuitous occurrence, as in the case of omens, auguries and sorcery in general,

but in the fact that it happens *in direct contradiction* to the supposed order of the natural world. Surely there is nothing in this insight that can give us just cause for annoyance. We have long been taught to consider the form in which the Bible clothes its truths as adapted to the needs and understanding of the people to whom they were addressed. The Bible itself frequently questions the faith of those who are forever demanding signs and do not perceive that the value of the prophet's message lies in its own intrinsic worth. The wine is not less excellent because it is served in vessels of earth. And of us who examine the vessels it must not be taken amiss if we analyze the terrestrial matter of which they are composed.

We approach the last and most important division of our subject. The influence of Palestine's physical geography on the domestic and religious life of the Hebrew. To discuss this question properly, it will be necessary to fix those two points on which the whole argument hinges.

First. What was the character of domestic life among the Hebrews before they settled in Palestine?

Secondly. What was the nature of those modifying influences to which they became subject after their settlement?

As the records upon which we must rely are few and fragmentary, it will be necessary to supplement our investigation by the help of comparative research. The Hebrews were originally a nomadic people, akin in customs, manners, and language to their brother Semites, the Arab Bedouins. The latter have scarcely departed from their primitive habits even at the present day. They led a roving, restless life, "their hand against all men, the hand of all against them," without a permanent abode, or the means of perpetuating the fruits of their toil, compelled to contend with their neighbors for the scanty pasture lands, and entirely dependent on the number of their warriors for success in the dire struggle for existence.

Hence it came about that the birth of a boy, promising, as it did, an increase to the strength of the organization, became the occasion for feasting and noisy demonstration of joy. Hence arose that supreme desire of male offspring, which is one of the most characteristic features of Arabian life. "Sweeter than a boy" is the Arab proverb that expresses the height of excellence. "May your union be tranquil and firm; may it be blessed with sons and with daughters" was the benediction announced over the newly-wedded pair.

Again, the Arab is a free-lance, possessing the chivalrous instincts, the virtues and vices, that arise in the pursuit of military glory. He seeks a foeman worthy of his steel. He is ever ready to resist a counter-claim ; but is kind and generous to those whose very weakness is a confession of his strength. The stranger who enters his tent is as safe as in his mother's arms. He will die for the females of his tribe who look to him for protection. On this account, notwithstanding their contempt for daughters, the sons of the desert accorded a degree of respect to their women hardly to be looked for in their semi-barbarous condition. And claims to respect would naturally be urged by those on whom the chance of increasing the tribe depended. A woman who had given birth to many sons was distinguished by an appellation of honor. Similar traits, in the relics of the nomadic period of their history we are at no loss to discover among the ancient Hebrews. The high value they set on male offspring is well known, and is illustrated not only by the story of Abraham and Isaac, Elkanah and Hannah, the parents of Samuel, but throughout the legal enactments and prophetic writing of the Old Testament. The comparatively independent position of women, too, appears in the achievements of the heroine Deborah, in the deference paid to women's counsels by the patriarchs, in the quiet submission of King Saul to the bitter taunt of the women of Israel. But it would, indeed, be over hasty to leap from these premises to the conclusion that the family, as at present constituted, was in the earliest times known among the Hebrews ; or to make the still broader assertion, as is frequently done by the uninformed, that it was, in its rudiments at least, at all times a possession of the human race. It was nothing of the kind, not even in its rudiments. However repugnant it may be to our sentiments, we must face the plain fact firmly, that the idea of a pure home, in our sense, was the product of a very long and tedious process of historical evolution. Beyond the point where what may be termed a family first emerged in the progress of our race, there lies a vast obscure period, filled with crude and sometimes hideous forms of social intercourse, which the veil of oblivion has only partially shrouded from our knowledge. If it should appear in the course of these investigations that the Hebrews themselves shared in some of those lower forms, this will not diminish our admiration for the moral power developed in their midst ; on the contrary, our gratitude towards this people will rather be deepened, when we learn that to their noble and strenuous efforts we owe our present elevation to a higher plane.

We shall now cast a brief glance on some of the most important stages through which the institution of domestic life has passed among mankind, in order to discover what ruder forms the Hebrews held in common with other races, and, later on, to determine the influence of physical conditions in modifying and exalting their conceptions of the family.

On consulting the works of those authors who have given the subject the most exhaustive study, McLennan, Morgan, Sir J. Lubbock, Sir Henry Maine, Bastian and others, we find them all agreed in the statement that the primitive condition of domestic life among the human species was *hetairism*, *promiscuity*, or what may by courtesy be called *communal marriage*. At that time the individual was related solely to the group which contained him and the relations between the sexes, as Lubbock has it, were ordered "on the good old plan, that he should take who has the power, and he should keep who can." This state of things still exists among the *Ansarians*, the *Keiaz*, the *Eimauk*, the *Koryaks*, the *Mpongme*, the *Puharies* of the *Himalayas*, etc. Our baser nature was still all but supreme, and it took a long time to loosen its hold.

At a somewhat later epoch (it is impossible at present to determine the exact order in which the different forms succeeded each other), the main body was subdivided into various minor groups, in which the former rule of *promiscuity* continued to hold good; but its application was confined to the members within the group, all others being excluded. In connection with this form, and explained by it, we may notice the curious custom of tracing descent in the female line which still prevails among so many of the barbarous tribes. In the communities I have described it is impossible to trace the father's blood. The connection between mother and child, on the other hand, is assured by nature, and strengthened by innumerable ties. On this account, the idea of kinship could be extended with certainty to those only who are related on the mother's side. The sons and daughters, the brothers and sisters, of the mother belong together, and are united by mutual affections of the most cordial character. The bond between the husbands and the children has been, and still is in numerous instances, extremely loose. Considering the degraded condition in which women are generally held among the ruder races, it is impossible to conceive that they should have obtained this preference above the males in the primitive systems of consanguinity on any ground other than that of necessity. Among the Hebrews we have ample

proof that descent was at one time traced in the female line, and hence that at some period of their history domestic intercourse among them must have been based on the communal principle. Accounts of similar arrangements have been transmitted to us concerning their kinsmen, the Arabs. Far from casting a shadow on the sacred history, however, it will presently appear that this new insight serves rather to remove what has by many been considered a grave blemish in the character of some of the most revered personages of Holy Writ. Thus Abraham marries his own sister, by the same father though not by the same mother; Nahor espouses his neice; Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron, his aunt; while David is believed to have considered the union of two of his children, Tamar and Amnon, by different wives, unobjectionable. Most of these alliances, must, indeed, be condemned as grossly immoral, unless we recollect that descent was reckoned in the female lines; that relationship through the father was uncertain, was, indeed, hardly relationship at all, and that persons so connected might fairly be considered sufficiently remote from each other to render intermarriage at least permissible. A still later form, and, we conceive, a signal advance upon the ones we have been considering, was polyandry. This system still prevails throughout Tibet, in parts of India, in Ceylon, it is said on the Aleutian Islands, and among the Saporagian Cossacks of Russia, thus embracing many millions of human beings within its limits. McLennan calls that the "higher polyandry," where the husbands are all brothers. In Tibet, Turner assures us that he himself saw five brothers living very happily with one female, under the same connubial compact. The elder brother chooses the wife. In such a communal home all my father's brothers' children are my brothers and sisters, all my father's brothers are my fathers, or little fathers, as they are sometimes called. The relations of him whom we now term uncle to brothers' children are far more intimate, and his obligations toward them more direct than in our system. (It is curious to observe, in passing, that the German word *vetter*, meaning little father, was still employed by Luther in the sense of uncle.) A peculiar modification of polyandry is found among the Reddies of India, where the son is betrothed when a mere child, and the bride becomes provisionally the wife of her father-in-law until her real husband reaches the age of maturity. Now, in Ladak, Moocroft reports (see McLennan's "Primitive Marriage") that when the eldest of the brothers marries, he takes possession of the family estate. The junior brothers are then received into the

home as inferior husbands. On the death of the eldest brother, his property, authority, and *widow* devolve upon the next brother. The right of succession is here distinctly connected with the possession of the widow. Finally, we see this polyandrous custom in its decay in the laws of Manu, which prescribe the marriage of the widow only in such cases where the elder brother has died without leaving male issue.

To make the application of all this to the case before us, we remark, in the first place, that among Arabs, also, heirship and the espousal of the widow went hand in hand. Before the time of Mohammed, the heir married one of the wives of his deceased parent; and in Pococke's specimen it is said "they inherited the obligation of marriage as they received property through marriage." Among the Hebrews the relics of polyandry are unmistakable. The Book of Deuteronomy says that when brothers lived *together*, and one of them dies without male issue, it shall be the duty of her brother-in-law to take the widow to wife. That this obligation was originally founded on the right of the younger brother to succeed to the vacant estate is plainly indicated by the ceremony of the shoe, which was the symbol of proprietary rights; and, to obviate all doubts, a declaration of mutual inter-dependence of heredity and marriage is distinctly put down in the Book of Ruth. If we see the duty of the Levirate here confined to cases where male issue is wanting, this is an instance of exact correspondence with the law as embodied in the code of Manu. Another instance in point is the peculiar relationship subsisting between father's brother and nephew. In 1 Sam., x, the uncle of Saul completely takes the place of the father. The duty of the uncle to redeem the property when its preservation is endangered is based on the right of succession formerly vested in father's brother. As a rule, the cousin has the first claim to the hand of an heiress, and this rule was also observed among the Arabs. The fact that the cousin was *eo ipso* the accepted suitor, gave rise, as I conceive, to the triple signification of the word *dod* in Hebrew, being uncle and cousin (like the German *vetter*), and finally, lover in general. Again, the narrative related in Gen. xxxvii, xxxviii, recalls the custom noticed above by which the father-in-law takes possession of the bride during the minority of his son. Our interpretation is confirmed by the fact that not only is Tamar there justified for taking this means to secure progeny, but the offspring of her union with her father-in-law becomes in time the legitimate heir, the ancestor of the princes

of Judah, and thus of David himself. How the same word in Hebrew could describe the different relationships of bride and daughter-in-law is thus made clear. Conversely, the word *chom* for father-in-law means also brother-in-law in Arabic, thus showing the similar position which both held with respect to the bride.

Polyandry depends on scarcity of woman. That women were scarce among the southern tribes will not surprise us when we remember the incessant feuds in which they were imbroiled with their neighbors. Among the spoils of war women were always accounted the most desirable. It was also shown by the horrid tale told in Judges, xix. Polyandry existed among the Hebrews. In what way was it exchanged for monogamy? By war, by capture, say the authorities from whom we have quoted in the above account of primitive marriage. The younger brothers, occupying an inferior position in the common home, would naturally grasp at any means that seemed likely to secure them independence. Joining in the forays which were continually making into the surrounding territories, they would succeed, as their tribe grew strong, in bringing home booty, driving in cattle and conquering women, whom they might adopt as wives, and to whom none of the kinsmen could rightfully lay claim. Having now both the means and the opportunity, they would build separate houses and form individual families. To this every motive of interest and ambition impelled them, and of the purity of these their homes they would be jealous in proportion as they recognized in them at once the testimony and the safeguard of their independence. Instances of such capture among the Hebrews may be found in the foray on Jabesh Gilead and the forcible seizure of the maidens of Shiloh. Polygamy, indeed, did also occur. But there is good reason for believing it to have been an exceptional case, a luxury for princes and the wealthy. While it was practiced among the common people only then, when the hope of male issue had been baffled in the first instance.

It now remains to be seen whether we can discover in the geographical position of the tribe of Judah any element that conduced to elevate and refine the domestic institution whose foundation had thus been laid. Between the Judean mountains and the sea coast there is a fertile hilly tract of land which formed the disputed border-land of the southern kingdom. In theory, it is true, this region was assigned to the Hebrew tribe, but, in fact, it was never completely wrested from the grasp of the Philistine confederacy, and remained their

almost exclusive possession during the most momentous, the *formative*, epoch of Judean history. While the invaders of a country generally take possession of the level land and drive the aboriginal inhabitants into the mountains (I recall the familiar examples of Britain and Hindostan), we have here an unique instance of the very opposite taking place. The vigorous conquerors, destitute of chariots (the indispensable instruments for warfare in the plain), subdued the inhabitants of the mountains, and, having once chosen their seats upon the highlands, were unable to extend their boundaries into the valley below, being wedged in between the gorge of the Jordan on the east and the hostile lowlanders of Philistea on the west. The bearing of this circumstance on their history will be readily appreciated. They had brought with them from their previous nomadic condition a profound affection for their male offspring, and a chivalrous disposition toward the weak, which was displayed in the deference paid to at least a certain class of their women. They had gradually reared, as we have shown, at least the basis of the monogamic family; had gained private possessions, built private homes. To guard the integrity of these homes, to protect wife and children, now became their chief task, and in proportion as this task was difficult it increased their solitude and *matured their affections* for the objects of their care. And, indeed, it was difficult. "It is easier to raise a grove of olives in Galilee than to rear a single child in Judea," says the proverb, even in the time of the Talmud. The means of subsistence were often scarce, and the conditions of life at all times precarious among the rocks and precipices of Judea. More than all this, the incessant conflicts between the Judeans and the Philistine borderers which continued during so many long centuries, taught them to be ever on the alert, and compelled them frequently to lay down their lives in the defense of their hearth-fires. Common danger is everywhere a strong bond of union. The difficulty of obtaining or preserving an object lends a fictitious value even to what is in itself worthless. How greatly then must such considerations have tended to increase and deepen the domestic affections of an ardent and susceptible race which natural ties had already begun to awaken. Isolated, at war with the elements and with men, the Judeans drew closely together, and clung to each other for mutual aid and support. Here, then, as in Scotland and Switzerland, were developed the peculiar virtues that distinguish highland life — ten-

der devotion to each other among the nearest and dearest, and a firm bond of alliance between all the clansmen. The privacy of home gave rise to the sanctity of home, the firmer union of a single pair gave us the precious law of chastity, hardly known in a lower epoch. And thus among the heights of Judah the wife, the mother, for the first time in the annals of mankind, was exalted to her proper sphere. In the chronicles of the Judean kings alone (not in those of Israel), the mother's name is always added to that of the reigning monarch. She was called "the lady," and occupied a position at court only inferior to that of the sovereign himself. Athalia, a woman, reigned for six years in Judah. Here the words of *prophetesses* were listened to and obeyed. Here, later on, the idea could arise that a man "cleaves to his wife and they become as one flesh." And here that picture of the true housewife, which is unrolled to us in Proverbs, found its original: the picture of her who unites all womanly grace and gentleness, in whose environment reign health and comfort and beauty, "whose husband and sons rise up to praise her," who is the personification of all those dear, sweet influences which we gather into the one word — home. Among the solitary rocks of Judah, too, we behold the bloom of friendship flowering out in refreshing contrast to the general bareness and monotony of life. The covenant between Jonathan and David (which reminds us strongly of the institution of brotherhood between the "billies" in Scotland) was but the type of a larger practice. Indeed, all the members of the tribe were supposed to be united in a common bond of friendship. The Hebrews never employed such cold abstract terms as "one and another" to express the relations between human beings, but they said "a man and his brother," "a man and his friend." The remains of the former condition of their domestic life were now blended into harmony with the nobler ideal of the family which their highland life had developed. The younger brother was now no longer to wed the widow for the sake of enriching himself; but, frequently to the detriment of his own estate, he was asked to preserve the name and inheritance of his brother purely for love's sake. The same obligation rested, in certain cases, on the more distant kinsmen, and was based on the same unselfish motives. The rude forms of an all too intimate connection were thus adopted into the higher system, but so developed and modified as only to strengthen the singular and beautiful conception of solidarity of interests which now obtained in Judah.

The influence of the domestic life of the Hebrews on their religion can only be briefly indicated here. It will best be understood if we remember that the religions of the Semitic peoples around them were founded on the double cult of pain and of pleasure. The one found its symbol in Baal-Moloch, the other in the Phœnician Venus. The worship of the one consisted in the immolation of children, that of the other in the practice of prostitution in the temples. Against both these forms of worship the heart of the Hebrew rebelled. How could he sacrifice his boy, the price of his love; how could he deliver his women to shame! Yet both these things were demanded of him, aye, demanded in the name of religion. Repelled on both sides, he was forced to take a new departure. It was, indeed, a revelation of Jehovah when Abraham drew back the knife from the immolation of his son. The fond affection of the Hebrew father and the cult of Baal-Moloch could not go together. The case of Michal shows us how the idea of chastity would put down the other form of Semitic worship. On an occasion of festive pomp, David performed one of those religious dances which appear to have been borrowed from the cult of pleasure. The wife expostulates with her husband and urges that it is shameful for him to expose himself before the hand-maidens. Yet, in so doing, she was opposing a recognized and wide-spread form of Semitic worship. The stronghold of the family and of monotheism was in Judea. Jehovah himself is represented by the prophets as the ideal Father, a Judge and Law-giver like the ancient patriarch. Israel is called his wife, the people are his children. Irreligion and unchastity are expressed in Hebrew by the same term. And the great name by which Jehovah is known is Holy God, which means pure God — God of purity!

The family, as a moral institution, is the creation of the Hebrew people. If this were their sole achievement for mankind, it were enough to ensure them the high position in its history which the general voice has accorded them. In the crucible of their early trials, that pure gold was refined from its dross, and was worn ever after, a priestly fillet, inscribed to All Holiness! When the Hebrews were forced to abandon the land of their fathers, they left it with character fully formed. Lonely as they had been, they continued this course through the ages, erect, self-poised, secluded from the intercourse of men. The love of the miraculous never quite died out in their midst. But, above all their faults, shines forth this one great virtue — the hallowed purity of their homes. Do you wonder that a people so

small and weak could resist the malice of its foes? Do you ask how it came about that they, without a common center of union, were not long since crushed out from the earth's surface? I answer that the *hearth* was the center of their union. There each atom gained consistency sufficient to withstand the pressure of the world. Thither they could come to recreate their torn and lacerated spirits. There was the well-spring of their power. By this they lived.

The task which I attempted this evening is a great one, and a faint outline of what might be achieved was all that I could give. The part which physical geography plays in aiding the developments of human thought, is, indeed, great. True, the powers and possibilities reside in the mind itself. But had not the opportunities of the external world called them forth, they would even now continue to lie dormant. This close connection between the material and the mental may startle us at first. But it will cease to give us pain if only we remember that each is but the fleeting phenomenon of a transcendant and ineffable source. Over the abyss of waters you see a mist hovering momentarily. Light-beams from a far off sun glance over it; are reflected there, fitfully, in *diverse hues*. So, like a mist of morning, the spirit of man broods over the unknown. And if the without and the within are diverse reflections, which he struggles in vain to unite in one white beam of certainty, let him find comfort in the presentiment of that greater Light beyond in which both are surely one unbroken.



Map of

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By E. G.

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